

**Written Testimony
Mayor Royce E. Pollard
City of Vancouver, Washington**

In support of H.R. 2099

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands. My name is Royce Pollard, Mayor of Vancouver, Washington. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of House Resolution 2099, amending the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 to provide adequate funding authorization for the Vancouver National Historic Reserve.

First off, for those of you who may not know about Vancouver, we are the fourth largest city in the state of Washington and are located on the north bank of the Columbia River directly across from Portland, Oregon. I could go on about the many wonderful virtues about our city and community, but for today, I will focus my discussion with you on the Reserve.

Few places in our country can match the historic assets of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve. You all know about Colonial Williamsburg. Well, we think the Reserve can be the Williamsburg of the west. We know the Reserve has the potential to be as intriguing, as interesting and as much of a destination as Williamsburg is. We want the Reserve to be one of our nation's premiere historic sites.

The Historic Reserve played a significant role in the events that shaped the history of the west and the Pacific Northwest -- from the Indian Nations that were long-established by the time Lewis and Clark visited our shores, to the fur and trade monopoly of the British Empire – it all happened right here.

The Reserve, designated by Congress in 1996, has been recognized as the most historically significant site in the Pacific Northwest. The Historic Reserve's cultural resources encompass successive layers that reflect major themes in the nation's history—pre-dating the arrival of Lewis and Clark through the mid-20th century. Highlights of this layered history include:

- Early Native American inhabitants of the area
- Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805–06
- Hudson's Bay Company headquarters operations at Fort Vancouver
- 150 years of U.S. Army history at Vancouver Barracks, the Northwest's military administrative headquarters beginning in 1849
- "Golden Era of Aviation" at Pearson Field 1920s-1930s, one of the U.S. Army's oldest airfields
- Officers Row (honoring such notables as Ulysses S. Grant, O.O. Howard, and George C. Marshall)
- Columbia River—one of the world's great waterways, an artery of commerce and productivity from the prehistoric era to the present

The 366-acre Reserve boasts a unique, urban location – right in the heart of our downtown core. It is comprised of Officer's Row, Vancouver Barracks, Pearson Field and Fort Vancouver. Its southern border is the mighty Columbia River. As many of you know, the Columbia River has long enticed Native Americans, explorers, workers, traders, soldiers, and settlers to its shores. Indigenous peoples fished and settled along

its banks and tributaries. The Hudson's Bay Company established its western fur trade headquarters along the Columbia at Fort Vancouver and, as a result, greatly influenced the economic, political, and cultural development of the Pacific Northwest. Fort Vancouver emerged as the most multi-cultural and diverse community in the west with close to a 1,000 people, made up of French-Canadians, Hawaiians, Scots, and members of over 30 different American Indian tribes, calling the Reserve home. Thousands of American settlers emigrated over the Oregon Trail and arrived at Fort Vancouver in desperate need of supplies and assistance. The birth of what is today the Pacific Northwest was made possible by the generosity provided to these settlers by the villagers at Fort Vancouver.

Fort Vancouver is now considered the premiere historical archaeological site in the Pacific Northwest. Over 50 years of excavations have resulted in a collection of 1.5 million artifacts used by researchers and visitors from around the world.

Along with the settlement of these Oregon Trail pioneers, the emergence of Vancouver Barracks as the first U.S. Army post in the Pacific Northwest determined the boundaries of the United States, adding the territory that would become Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

The Barracks was the headquarters for the Department of the Columbia and many "famous" soldiers including Ulysses S. Grant, George McClellan, Philip Sheridan, O.O. Howard and George C. Marshall were stationed here at some point in their careers. From the 19th through the 21st centuries, this post continued a rich tradition of military service. Soldiers served in the Indian Wars, the Philippines, and both World Wars. In 1917, the U.S. Army operated the world's largest spruce mill on this site, providing lumber for the manufacture of biplanes during World War I.

Officer's Row, which served as residential housing for many of the soldiers, officers and families stationed at Vancouver Barracks has been beautifully restored and rehabilitated. Once described as "21 white elephants nose to tail", today, the stately tree-lined row is pointed to with pride as one of our city's signature assets.

Last, but not least, the Reserve is also home to the oldest continuously-operated airport in the county, Pearson Field. From 1923 to 1941, Pearson was home to the U.S. Army Air Service and many key events during the "Golden Age of Flight." One of its first commanders made the first non-stop transcontinental flight in 1923. In 1937, a Soviet aviator and crew landed there at the end of history's first non-stop, trans-polar flight.

As you can tell by my brief history lesson, the Reserve is a historic gem. Both Fort Vancouver and Officer's Row are listed on the National Register. Vancouver Barracks and Pearson Field are eligible for listing on the Register as well.

While I can tell you more about the Reserve's historical significance, my main purpose is to urge you to support this increase in appropriations so we can preserve, maintain, and reuse this valuable piece of our nation's history.

When Congress passed legislation establishing the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, the designation set forth a partnership among the four landowners in the Reserve – the National Park Service, the City of Vancouver, the U.S. Army and the Washington State Office of Historic Preservation. The non-profit Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust supports the Reserve by bringing private resources into the

partnership.

Key Congressional Actions

Congressional involvement in the Reserve goes back to 1948.

- *Fort Vancouver National Monument* Establishment of Fort Vancouver National Monument in Vancouver, Washington; transfer of lands by War Assets Administration and Secretary of the Army to Secretary of the Interior authorized, (62 Stat. 532) June 19, 1948
- *Fort Vancouver National Historic Site* Fort Vancouver National Monument authorization to increase boundaries revised and monument re-designated as “Fort Vancouver National Historic Site,” June 30, 1961 (75 Stat. 196)
- *National Historic Preservation Act, 1966* Establishes a program for the preservation of historic properties throughout the Nation and, in section 106, identifies governmental obligations. 16 U.S.C. 470; P L 89-665 October 15, 1966 as amended through 1992 by P L 102-575.
- *Vancouver Historical Study Commission* Established the Vancouver Historical Study Commission for the purpose of evaluating resources in the area and determining the feasibility of creating a Vancouver National Historic Reserve, P L 101-523, November 5, 1990
- *Vancouver National Historic Reserve* Legislation establishing the Vancouver National Historic Reserve as defined in the Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment, by the Vancouver Historical Study Commission, 1993. Required a General Management Plan to be completed no later than three years after the Act. This plan was to be developed by a Partnership team consisting of one representative from each of the following organizations: the National Park Service, Historic Preservation Office of the State of Washington, the Department of the Army and the city of Vancouver, P L 104-333, Sec. 502, November 12, 1996
- *West Barracks Transfer Authority* 2000 Legislation provides for transfer of the west Vancouver Barracks property to the city of Vancouver. Allows the Secretary of the Army to approve the transfer presently scheduled for mid 2002.

RATIONALE FOR FEDERAL FUNDING REQUEST

The request for \$20 million of federal funding to assist in the preservation and reuse of the Reserve is partially based on principle and partially based on the financial benefits derived from the public/private partnership proposed by the city of Vancouver and the Reserve Trust.

There are two fundamental principles underlying the funding request:

Principles

1. Historic Preservation. The U.S. Government has an obligation to assist in the preservation of one of the nations important historic sites first recognized by the designation of the Fort Vancouver National Monument in 1948. (renamed in 1961 as the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site) and the establishment

of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve in 1996.

2. Conversion of Military Bases. The U.S. Government has an obligation to assist in the conversion of no longer needed military bases to non-military purposes.

Financial Benefits

1. Federal funding will leverage local and state public funding and private contributions. The federal government share is proposed at 37% of the total project cost. The federal money would be used primarily to rehabilitate the buildings to a level of compliance with public safety codes and applicable federal laws such as ADA. Some federal money would also be used to preserve the important historical features of the site and buildings. (For example, use of “Save America’s Treasures funds to preserve the Red Cross Convalescent House already designated as an America’s Treasure.)

2. An early commitment of funding would enable the redevelopment to proceed at a more rapid pace resulting in substantial cost savings.

3. Without adequate federal funding for the barracks project, the city would not be in a financial position to accept transfer of the west barracks. In this event, the federal government would remain responsible for maintaining and protecting the property in accordance with statutory historic preservation requirements. In addition, the federal government would likely be faced with rebuilding old deteriorated infrastructure in the near future.

REQUESTED CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

The City of Vancouver, its partners, and the Reserve Trust are grateful for the recent and ongoing efforts by our Congressional delegation in support of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve. Our Congressional delegation led by Congressmen Brian Baird and Norm Dicks and Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, have pledged to secure an additional authorization for the Reserve. We expect the U.S. Army to provide financial support as well.

FY 2003 request for the Reserve:

Pass legislation providing an additional multi-million dollar federal “authorization” for capital projects at the Reserve. (The \$5 million ‘cap’ for capital projects included in the 1996 legislation creating the Reserve. has now been exceeded; this year’s Interior earmark was accompanied by a caveat that future appropriations for capital projects at the VNHR would require a lift of the lid). Senators Cantwell and Murray have introduced S 1649 and a companion measure HR 2099, has been introduced by Congressman Baird. Due to the specific language in this year’s Interior Conference Committee report, passage of this

legislation is critical.

The Trust has pledged to raise 20% of needed funding to establish a permanent endowment for the Reserve. We are asking the State of Washington to match the city's contribution of 15%.

CLOSING STATEMENT

Much needs to be done to restore and preserve the buildings on this site to make the community's visions of turning them into the classrooms, museums, or interpretive space a reality. The scope of this project is beyond our local resources, both public and private. Because of the national significance of this site, we feel that it is critical it be preserved and interpreted for future generations. To accomplish this, assistance from the federal government is crucial. This is an amazing, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to connect millions of people to our nation's heritage and its legacy of cultures, commerce and politics. Given the scope of this project, success will be realized only through the cooperative support and participation of all our partners. We are presented with an opportunity to create a model public/private partnership. The City of Vancouver is committed to the success of this unique preservation initiative. I urge your support of this resolution.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.